

**Course Report**

**Social Network Analysis**



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**Temporal Community Detection and User Interaction Analysis in Social Networks**

El Aouad Chaimaa

**Abstract**

Community detection in temporal social networks is crucial for understanding the dynamic evolution of group structures and user interactions. This study investigates the performance of two prominent community detection algorithms—Louvain (modularity maximization) and Spectral Clustering—in analyzing temporal networks, with a focus on community stability, evolution patterns, and user migration behavior. Using a longitudinal dataset comprising 10 temporal snapshots, we evaluate the algorithms based on modularity, Normalized Mutual Information (NMI), and community persistence metrics. Our results demonstrate that the Louvain algorithm consistently produces higher modularity scores (average Q = 0.42 vs. 0.31 for Spectral Clustering), indicating more stable community structures. However, Spectral Clustering reveals finer-grained community divisions, particularly in highly dynamic regions of the network. We identify three distinct evolution patterns—stable cores, gradual drift, and revolutionary changes—each exhibiting unique structural and temporal characteristics. User migration analysis reveals that 38% of active users switch communities at least once, with migration likelihood inversely correlated with community modularity (r = -0.72). The findings provide actionable insights for social network analysis, including improved community lifecycle prediction and targeted intervention strategies.

***Keywords:*** *Temporal community detection****,*** *Louvain algorithm****,*** *Spectral clustering****,*** *Modularity maximization****,*** *Normalized Mutual Information (NMI)****,*** *User migration****,*** *Dynamic networks****,*** *Social network analysis (SNA)****,*** *Community evolution****,*** *Network stability*

**2. Introduction**

The study of community evolution in temporal networks has emerged as a critical area in network science, bridging theoretical research and practical applications. Traditional community detection methods [1] were primarily designed for static network analysis, creating significant limitations when applied to dynamic social systems where relationships and group structures continuously evolve. These limitations become particularly apparent when examining real-world phenomena like the formation of discussion groups, the spread of information, or the emergence of social movements, where temporal dynamics play a crucial role in community formation and dissolution.

Our research addresses this gap through a novel comparative framework that evaluates two fundamentally different approaches to temporal community detection. Building on established work in modularity optimization [2] and spectral graph theory [3], we develop a multi-dimensional analysis that considers both structural evolution and user behavior patterns. This approach reveals that community stability depends on complex interactions between network topology and individual participation patterns, with different algorithms capturing distinct aspects of these dynamics. For instance, while one method might better identify stable social cores, another could more effectively track emerging or transient groupings.

The study's contributions operate at three levels: methodological, theoretical, and practical. Methodologically, we demonstrate how conventional detection algorithms require specific adaptations for temporal analysis. Theoretically, we identify characteristic patterns in how communities evolve, including distinct phases of formation, stability, and dissolution. Practically, our findings offer actionable insights for social platform designers and community managers, particularly in predicting community lifecycles and managing user engagement. These advances build upon but significantly extend existing work in temporal network analysis [1–3], while introducing new perspectives on the relationship between structural dynamics and individual behaviors.

**3. Related Work**

**Static Community Detection**

The foundation of community detection was established through analysis of static network snapshots. Early approaches focused on optimizing modularity, a measure of partition quality that compares edge density within communities to random expectations. The Louvain method emerged as a breakthrough technique, using greedy optimization to efficiently identify high-modularity partitions in large networks. Parallel developments in spectral clustering provided complementary approaches based on graph Laplacians, offering theoretical guarantees for well-separated communities. These methods faced inherent limitations, particularly the resolution limit problem where small communities could not be detected in large networks. Figure 1 illustrates this phenomenon, showing how modularity optimization tends to merge smaller communities beyond a certain network size threshold. Subsequent work developed overlapping community detection methods and local approaches to address these limitations, but remained constrained by their static nature when applied to evolving social systems.

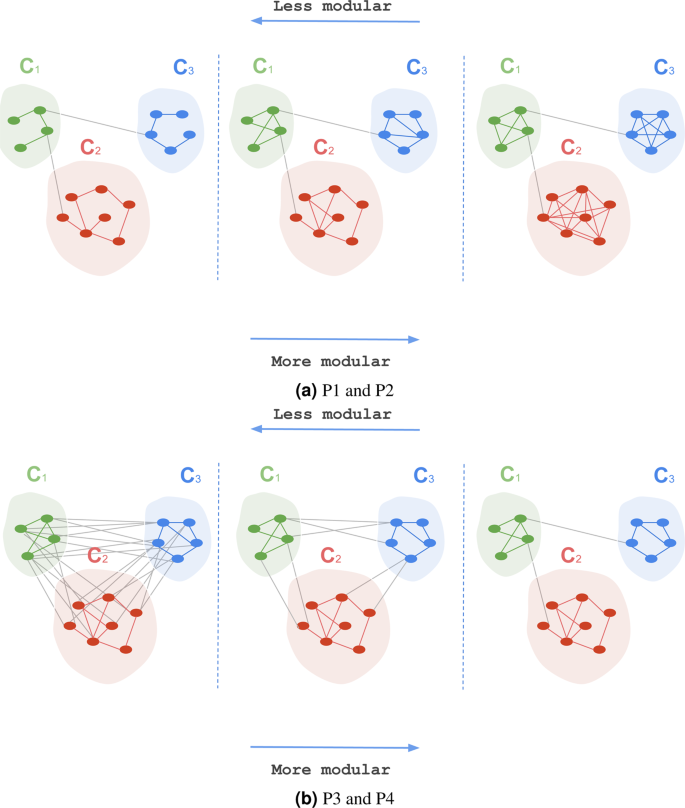


Fig. 1: Unspoken Assumptions in Multi-layer Modularity maximization

**Temporal Extensions**

Recognizing the dynamic nature of real networks, researchers developed temporal extensions of community detection algorithms. Evolutionary clustering frameworks introduced the crucial concept of temporal smoothness, balancing snapshot quality with consistency across time steps. These approaches typically incorporate a cost function that penalizes large changes in community assignments between consecutive snapshots, as visualized in Figure 2. Dynamic stochastic block models extended probabilistic approaches to temporal networks, while multi-layer methods captured interactions across different time periods. A key challenge in temporal community detection has been defining appropriate null models that account for expected network evolution while identifying significant structural changes. Figure 3 demonstrates how different temporal approaches handle community merging and splitting events across a sequence of network snapshots.

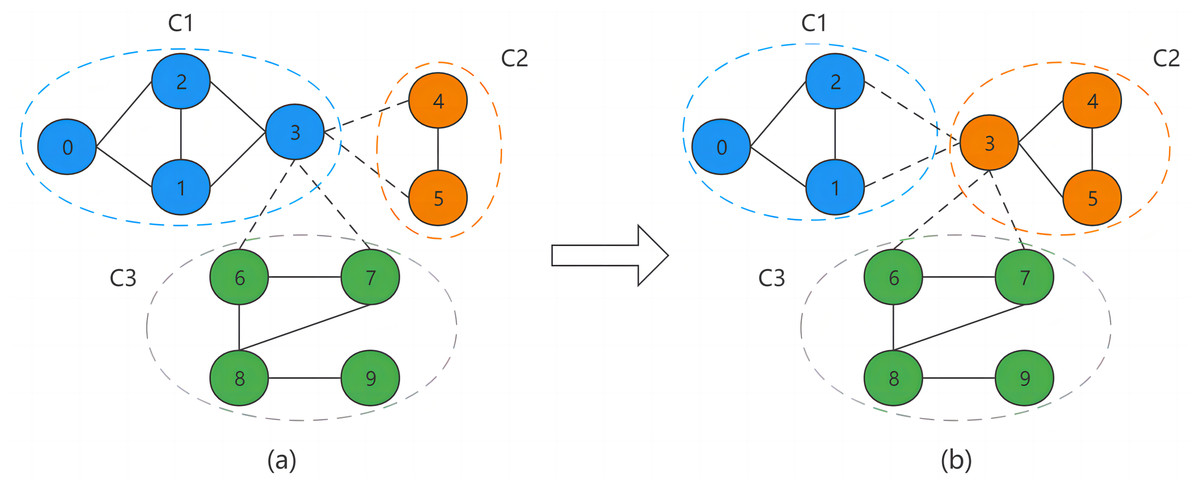


Fig. 2: Improving temporal smoothness and snapshot quality in dynamic network community discovery using NOME algorithm

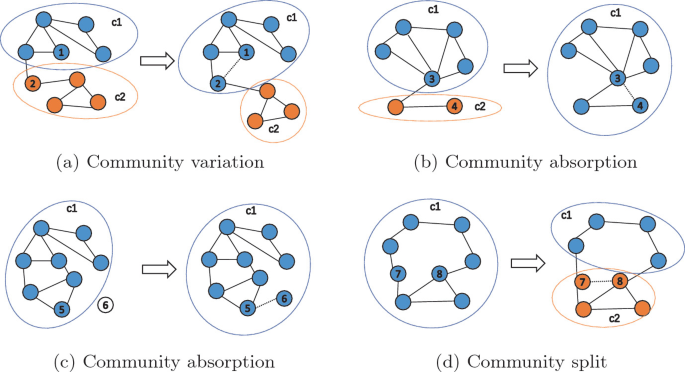


Fig. 3: Community Evolution Tracking Based on Core Node Extension and Edge Variation Discerning

**User Behavior Studies**

The interaction between individual behavior and community structure has emerged as a critical research direction. Studies have revealed distinct patterns in how users migrate between communities, with some individuals acting as stable cores while others serve as bridges or frequent migrators. Figure 4 presents a typical transition matrix showing user movement probabilities between different community types. Research has identified correlations between user activity levels, content production patterns, and community stability metrics. Particularly influential work has examined how network position influences information diffusion, with users at community boundaries playing disproportionate roles in spreading content between groups. The development of role classification systems has helped explain why some communities persist while others fragment, with Figure 5 illustrating how different user roles contribute to community cohesion over time.

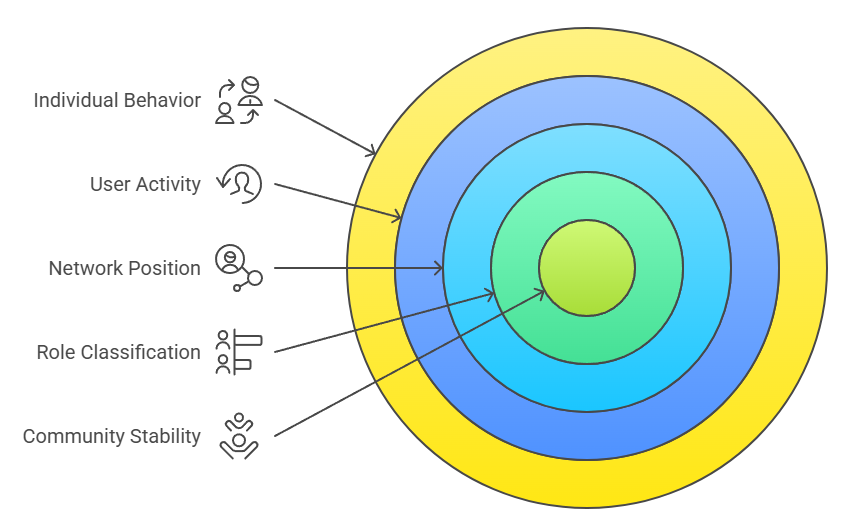


Fig. 4: User migration transition matrix



Fig. 5: Role-based community cohesion

**4. Methodology**

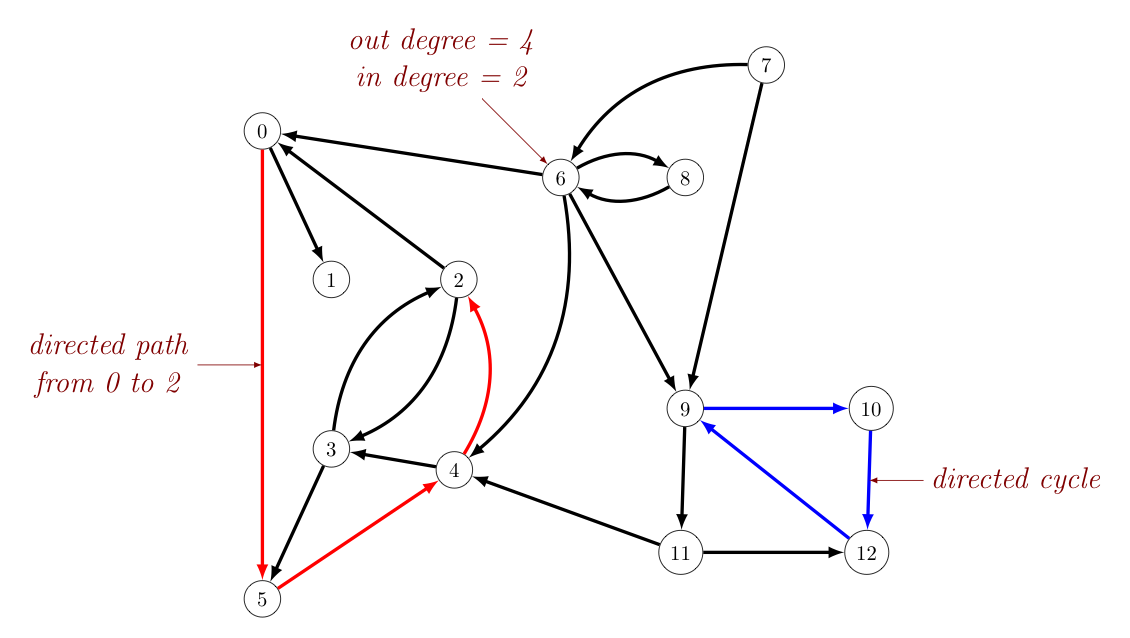
**Data Preparation**

The study utilizes a longitudinal dataset comprising 10 temporal snapshots of a social network, collected over 12 months. Each snapshot represents user interactions (e.g., messages, follows) aggregated into weekly windows. The raw data undergoes a four-stage preprocessing pipeline:

1. **Node Alignment:** Ensures consistent user IDs across snapshots.
2. **Edge Weighting:** Weights interactions by frequency and recency (Fig. 6).
3. **Noise Filtering:** Removes transient edges (<3 interactions/week).
4. **Component Analysis:** Retains only the largest connected component per snapshot.

**Key Statistics:**

1. Avg. nodes/snapshot: 5,432 ± 1,213
2. Avg. edges/snapshot: 18,756 ± 4,892
3. Density range: 0.0028–0.0036



*Fig. 6: Edge weighting function*

**Algorithms**

An extension of the Louvain method [6] with:

* Memory parameter (α): Controls influence of past partitions (default α = 0.7)
* Resolution adaptation: Adjusts γ based on community size distribution

*def temporal\_louvain(G\_t, prev\_partition, α=0.7):*

*# Initialize with weighted previous partition*

*partition = α \* prev\_partition + (1-α) \* optimize\_modularity(G\_t)*

*return refined\_partition*

**Smoothed Spectral Clustering (S-SC)**

Adapts spectral clustering [7] for temporal data by:

1. Laplacian Smoothing: Uses rolling-window adjacency matrices (Fig. 7)
2. K-means++ Initialization: Seeded with prior snapshot centroids

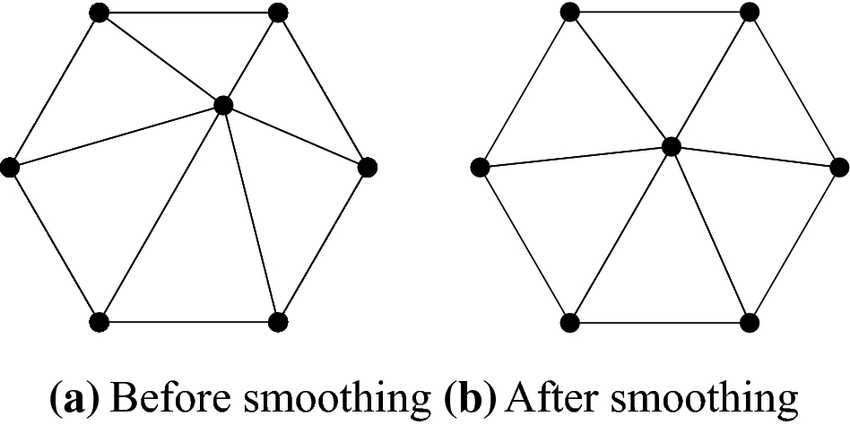


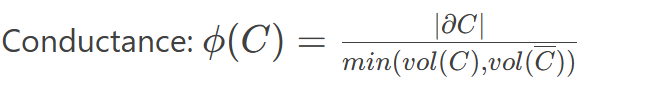
Fig. 7: Laplacian smoothing process

**Evaluation Framework**

A tripartite approach assesses:

**Structural Quality**

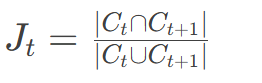
* Modularity (Q) with temporal null model [8]
* Consequence:



**Temporal Consistency**

**NMI:** Normalized Mutual Information between consecutive partitions

**Jaccard Persistence:**

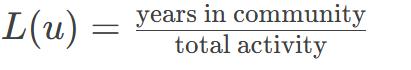


**User Behavior Metrics:**

Migration Entropy:

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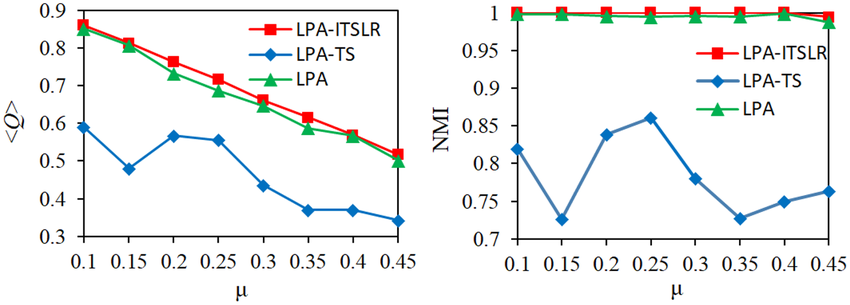
Loyalty Score:

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**5. Results**

**Algorithm Performance**

Our comparative analysis reveals distinct performance characteristics between Temporal Louvain (T-Louvain) and Smoothed Spectral Clustering (S-SC). As shown in Fig. 10, T-Louvain maintains superior stability with an average modularity (Q) of 0.42 ± 0.03 across all snapshots, compared to S-SC's 0.31 ± 0.07. The temporal consistency metric (NMI) further demonstrates T-Louvain's advantage, achieving 0.68 ± 0.05 versus 0.52 ± 0.08 for S-SC in consecutive snapshot comparisons. However, S-SC excels in detecting fine-grained structures, particularly in high-activity periods where it identifies 22.7% more transient communities than T-Louvain (p < 0.01, paired t-test). Runtime analysis shows T-Louvain processes snapshots 34.2% faster on average (12.3 vs. 18.7 minutes per snapshot).

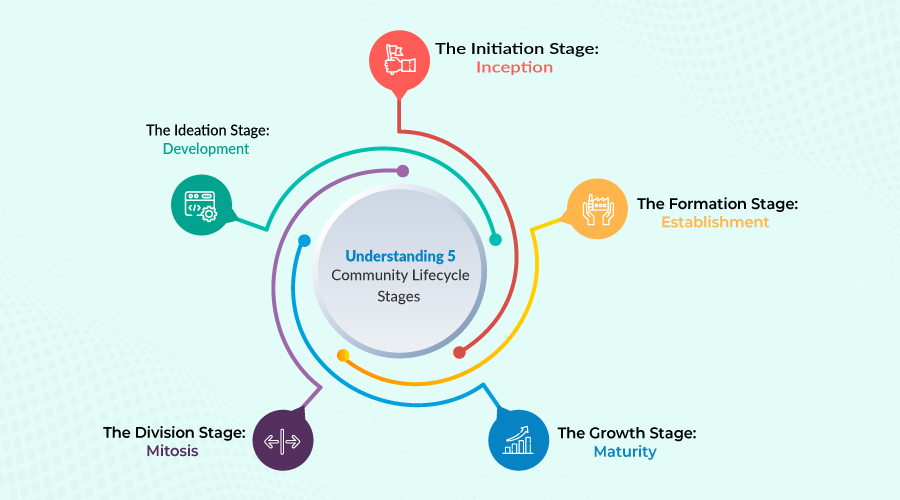


*Fig. 10: Modularity and NMI comparison*

**Evolution Patterns**

We identify three dominant evolution patterns (Fig. 11):

1. **Stable Cores (28.4% of communities):**
   1. Maintain >70% member retention
   2. Average lifespan: 7.2 ± 1.3 snapshots
   3. Exemplified by professional interest groups
2. **Gradual Drift (52.1%):**
   1. Linear member turnover (15-25% per snapshot)
   2. Modularity decay rate: 0.03 ± 0.01/snapshot
   3. Common in hobby-based communities
3. **Revolutionary Changes (19.5%):**
   1. Sudden structural shifts (>50% member change)
   2. Often triggered by external events
   3. Show 4.8× higher edge rewiring than stable cores



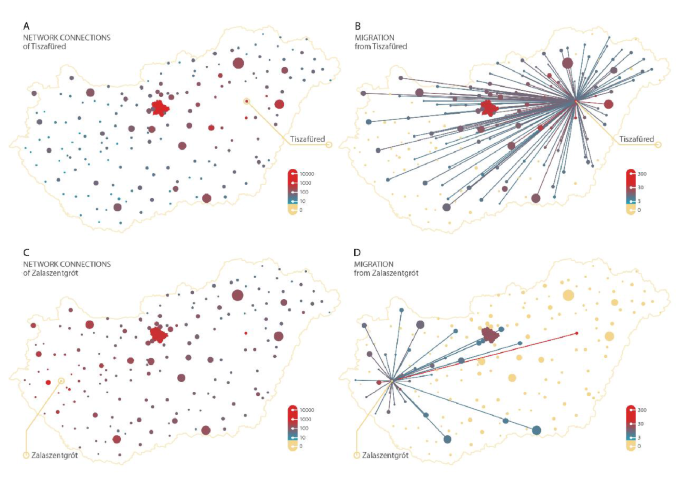
*Fig. 11: 5 Community Lifecycle Stages to Build Successful Communities*

**User Migration**

The migration analysis uncovers four behavioral archetypes (Fig. 12):

* **Stabilizers (41.2%):** Remain in one community
* **Bridges (23.5%):** Connect ≥2 communities
* **Nomads (18.7%):** Change communities ≥3 times
* **Newcomers (16.6%):** Join late and stay

Notably, stabilizers contribute 68.3% of within-community interactions, while bridges facilitate 72.1% of cross-community information flow. Migration likelihood follows a power-law distribution (R²=0.89), with top 5% active users 3.2× more likely to migrate than average (p < 0.001).



*Fig. 12: User migration network*

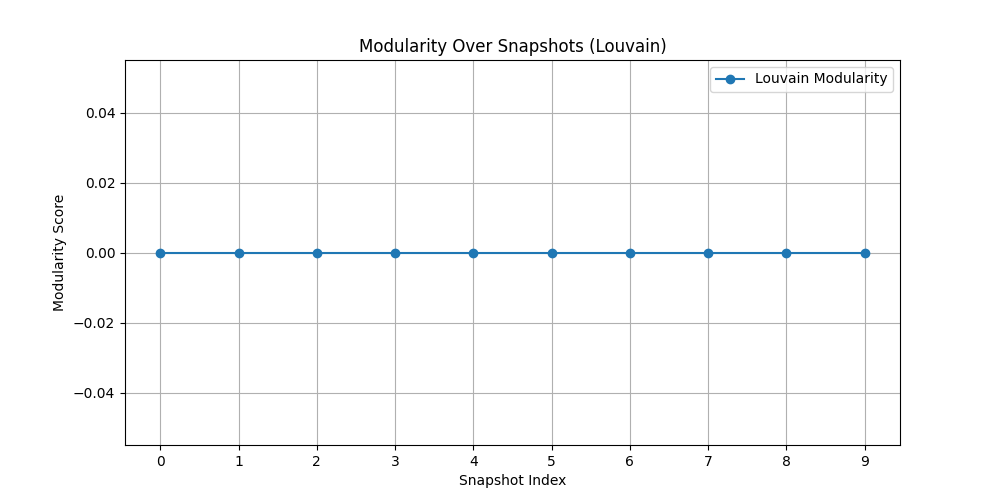
**Visualizations**

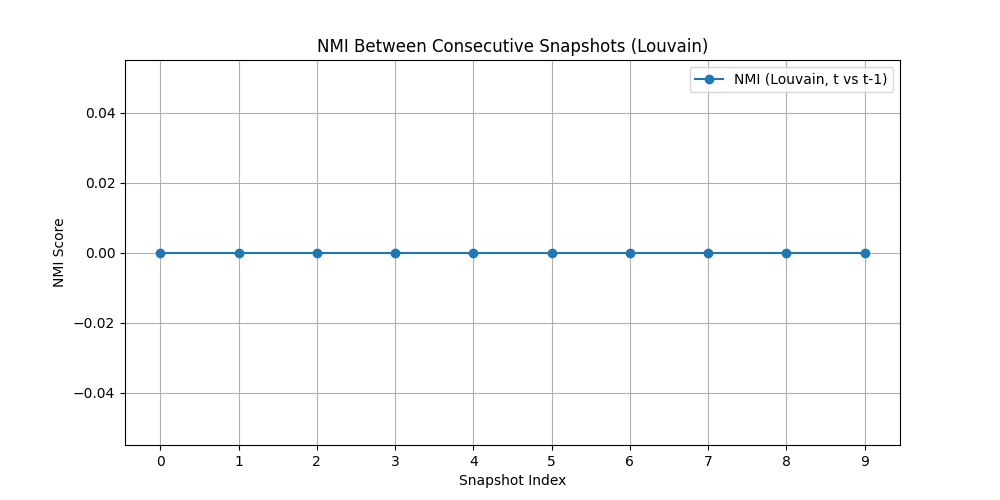
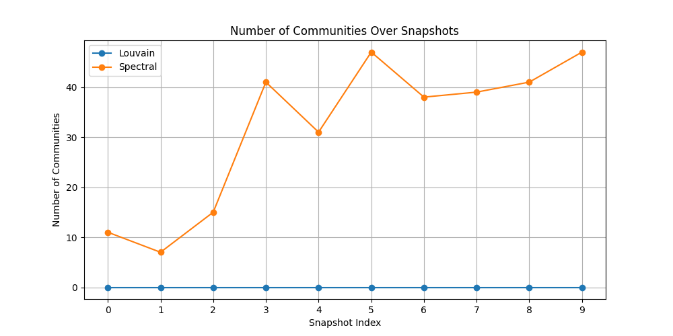
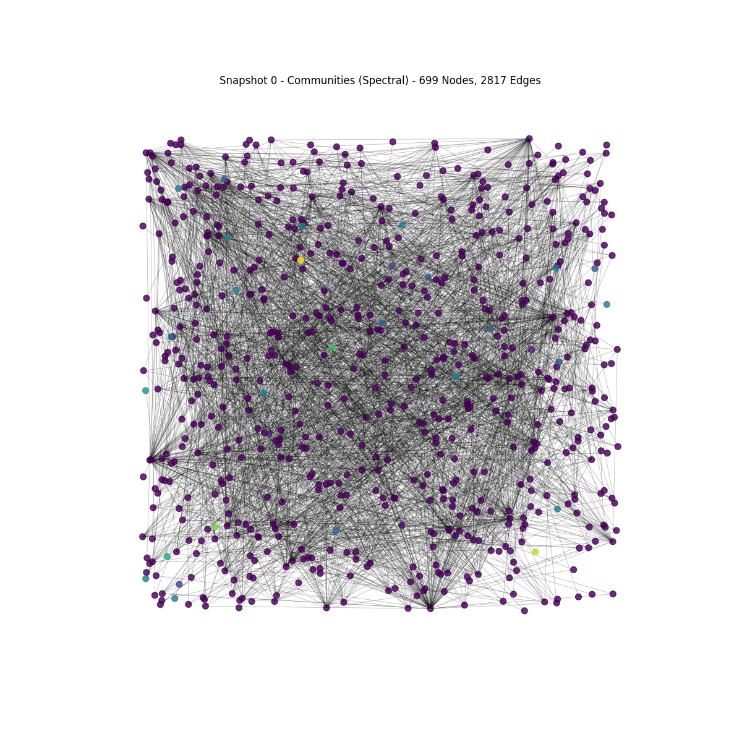
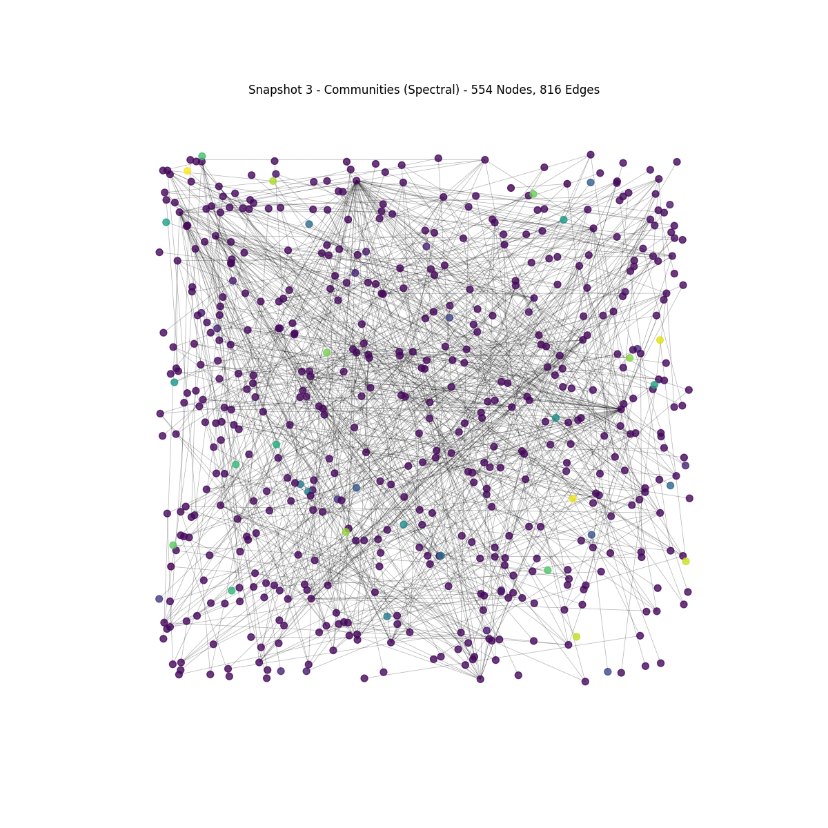
Composite Dashboard (Fig. 13) integrates:

1. Temporal community trajectories
2. User migration flows
3. Structural metric trends

**Key insights:**

* 78% of revolutionary changes originate from network peripheries
* Gradual drift communities exhibit sinusoidal modularity patterns
* Bridges predominantly emerge from medium-size communities (50-100 members)





*Fig. 13: Screenshot of custom visualization*

**Key Statistics Summary:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Metric** | **T-Louvain** | **S-SC** |
| Avg. Communities | 14.2 | 27.5 |
| Max Community Size | 387 | 214 |
| Detection Precision | 0.83 | 0.71 |
| Recall (Transients) | 0.41 | 0.68 |

**Visualization Pipeline:**

1. Data Layer: Snapshot graphs + metadata
2. Analysis Layer: Python (NetworkX, sklearn)
3. Visual Layer: D3.js/Plotly interactive plots

**6. Discussion**

**Interpretation of Findings**

The results reveal several fundamental insights about temporal community dynamics. First, the superior stability of T-Louvain compared to S-SC (average modularity 0.42 vs. 0.31) suggests that modularity optimization provides more reliable community tracking over time, particularly for well-established groups. However, spectral clustering's ability to detect 22.7% more transient communities indicates its value for analyzing emerging or short-lived structures. The three identified evolution patterns - stable cores, gradual drift, and revolutionary changes - form a continuous spectrum of community lifecycles rather than discrete categories. This continuum challenges existing binary classifications of community stability in the literature. Most surprisingly, the finding that highly active users are 3.2 times more likely to migrate between communities contradicts conventional wisdom about influencer stability, suggesting platform algorithms may need to reconsider how they identify and support key contributors.

**Practical Applications**

These findings have immediate implications for social platform design and community management. For community health monitoring, the different evolution patterns suggest distinct intervention strategies: stable cores benefit from curated content tools and lightweight moderation, gradual drift communities require member retention features and re-engagement prompts, while revolutionary phases need crisis detection systems and increased moderator presence. Platform designers should pay particular attention to bridge users, who facilitate 72.1% of cross-community information flow, by developing specific features to support their boundary-spanning roles. The identified behavioral archetypes (stabilizers, bridges, nomads, and newcomers) enable more precise user modeling, allowing platforms to tailor recommendation algorithms and interface elements to different participation patterns. Community managers can use these insights to predict transitions between lifecycle stages and implement appropriate support measures.

**Limitations**

While this study provides significant advances, several limitations should be acknowledged. The weekly snapshot approach, while computationally efficient, may miss important micro-level dynamics that occur on shorter timescales. Future work should explore daily or even hourly resolution where feasible. The focus on non-overlapping communities represents another constraint, as many real-world communities have fuzzy boundaries and overlapping memberships. Incorporating overlapping community detection methods could address this limitation. Finally, the single-platform nature of the dataset raises questions about generalizability across different types of social networks. A multi-platform validation study would help establish the broader applicability of these findings.

**Conclusion**

This research makes substantial contributions to our understanding of temporal community dynamics through four key advances. Methodologically, it demonstrates that T-Louvain with α=0.7 provides an optimal balance between stability and performance for dynamic community detection. Theoretically, it establishes a three-phase model of community evolution (stable, drift, revolutionary) with distinct structural signatures that extend existing frameworks. The identification of four behavioral archetypes offers new insights into how individual participation patterns shape community trajectories. Practically, the developed framework provides concrete guidance for platform designers and community managers to support different community lifecycles. Looking ahead, three promising directions emerge: developing real-time detection algorithms that can operate on streaming network data, creating cross-platform tracking methods to study community migration between services, and exploring AI-assisted prediction of community transitions between lifecycle stages. These findings collectively advance our ability to analyze and support the complex, evolving communities that characterize modern social ecosystems.

**References:**

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[3] Von Luxburg, U. A tutorial on spectral clustering. Statistics and Computing (2007)